

## 198hh- In The Seen Just The Seen

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( A Summarized Transcription Of A Hillside Hermitage Dhamma Talk )

“What do you think, Mālunkyaputta? The forms cognizable via the eye that are unseen by you—that you have never before seen, that you don’t see, and that are not to be seen by you: Do you have any desire or passion or love there?” “No, lord.”

“The sounds that are cognizable via the ear...“The aromas cognizable via the nose...“The flavors are cognizable via the tongue...“The tactile sensations cognizable via the body...“The ideas/phenomena cognizable via the intellect that are uncognizable by you—that you have never before cognized, that you don’t cognize, and that are not to be cognized by you: Do you have any desire or passion or love there?” “No, lord.”

“Then, Mālunkyaputta, with regard to phenomena to be seen, heard, sensed, or cognized: In reference to the seen, there will be only the seen. In reference to the heard, only the heard. In reference to the sensed, only the sensed. In reference to the cognized, only the cognized. That is how you should train yourself. When for you there will be only the seen in reference to the seen, only the heard in reference to the heard, only the sensed in reference to the sensed, only the cognized in reference to the cognized, then, Mālunkyaputta, there is no you in connection with that. When there is no you in connection with that, there is no you there. When there is no you there, you are neither here nor yonder nor between the two. This, just this, is the end of suffering.”

“I understand in detail the meaning of what the Blessed One has said in brief: “Having seen a sight, (Having heard a sound, smelled a smell, tasted a taste, touched a touch, known a phenomenon...) recollectedness is forgotten when attending to the sign of the ‘beloved’. He experiences an impassioned mind and he keeps holding. For him, with the arising of sights, various feelings increase. For him, the mind is spoiled by desire and irritation. Accumulating suffering in this way, Nibbana is said to be far away.

“He is not impassioned by sights (sounds, smells, tastes, touches, or phenomena...). Having seen a sight he is recollected. He experiences a dispassionate mind and he doesn't keep holding. For one seeing a sight like this, while practicing, feeling is exhausted, not accumulated. He lives like this, recollected. Diminishing suffering in this way, Nibbana is said to be nearby.” - [SN 35:95](#)

Can you have lust for things that you haven't seen before? That's inconceivable because ‘having seen something’ is a prerequisite for lust. You, however, are responsible for having lust towards the seen, and one of the reasons why a person would have lust towards the seen is because they take for granted that which is seen, they take for granted the sense organs as their own, as the providers of pleasure and so on. So then whatever you see, it's only the thing you see, you are fully centered around that but if you

stop and think about it, it doesn't matter what you have lust towards, just look at the context of that experience and reflect: "Ok, I have seen this, but which is more, things I have seen in my life or things I haven't seen?". You will realise that things you see or have seen will always be less compared to things you haven't seen. Even when some things you haven't seen become that which you have seen, still there will always be more of that which is not seen.

Can you have lust towards that which is not seen? That's inconceivable. So the basis then, for non-lust is even greater than the basis for lust. By thinking like this, you realize that anything you have seen was purely circumstantial, you can realise: "I could have not seen it, it could have not been". When you have that framework or that established context, anything else you see, will be seen against that context of "It could have not arisen", and you realise you have no say in that thing arising, which in turn means that you will be less centered around things you see, much less absorbed in objects, which means your basis for the possibility of lust will be narrower. The loss of context, or being absorbed into a sense experience without any peripheral awareness in regard to it, that is where the lust breeds and multiplies.

Things you have seen are always secondary to things you haven't seen, which means that your lust for the seen is also secondary. Now, if you were to cultivate the recognition of everything that you haven't seen as a necessary basis for non-lust, it will be impossible for you to maintain the lust towards things that you are seeing here and now. Such a practice is the undermining of that centredness upon things you have seen, heard, sensed, cognised, and when I say 'centredness' I mean that absorption in sense objects as a default mode of being. You need to start eroding that gratuitous perception and one of the ways is recognising that everything you have seen and will see, and seeing now, is fundamentally circumstantial because it's always against the backdrop of everything else you have not seen. That can put the current lust towards things you have seen in a better perspective.

If you develop the context that everything that has not been seen is greater, the desire for things not seen won't matter anymore because you realise that it does not matter what you see in the future, it will always be secondary to the framework of everything else not seen. If you lust for new things, or things you have seen, that means you have lost the recollection of the framework, the bigger picture, you have obscured the context. It does not matter what you have seen, or how many times you have seen it, by being seen, it becomes second. By acting out of lust, you put those circumstantial things that have been seen, the centre of your experience, which means you become dependent on that which is already second. If you have lust, you are putting that which is second first. The first (more primordial or fundamental) is everything that is not seen, the circumstantial nature of seen, if you maintain that recognition, it doesn't matter what future seeing or possibility of future seen, it will all have to come within the framework of everything else not seen, and that's exactly how you can develop your mind

above lust. You don't develop your mind above lust by never perceiving anything beautiful in the world, you develop your mind by not perverting that order ever again in the world, it does not matter what you see.

The absence of lust is greater, that's why it's possible to overcome sensuality because it's fundamentally second, likewise with non-hate and hate. If sensuality were truly rooted in the things themselves, things you have seen and the way you see them, it would not be a problem that you could free yourself from, but the reason sensuality is a problem is because it requires that perversion of perception, it requires that distortion, it requires wrong view, and implicit risk of committing to that which is circumstantial.

Imagine someone offers you a new car to drive for free, but informs you that there might be a bomb rigged to it, it might explode. Would you risk driving that car? You wouldn't, because it doesn't matter the appeal of the object, you have the greater context/framework that there is a bomb that could explode, you realise that you would be basing your entire existence upon something entirely circumstantial and uncertain, whereby if that thing changes you will not be able to remain unaffected by it. By maintaining that context, it does not matter what you sense, you will not have lust towards it because the danger is apparent. You cannot have the context of the danger, the risk, the circumstantial nature and at the same time enjoy the object of that. The only way to enjoy it is to not see the risk. It's mutually exclusive. And it's not like you must now try and not see things, because if you maintain the right context, you will simply not seek sights out and if they do arise you will not be overwhelmed, afraid or trying to avoid it either. In the seen there will just be the seen, there will be no avoiding it or trying to prolong it, because in the seen there is now no more perversion of the context of the seen.

“...That is how you should train yourself. When for you there will be only the seen in reference to the seen, only the heard in reference to the heard, only the sensed in reference to the sensed, only the cognized in reference to the cognized, then, Mālunkya-putta, there is no you in connection with that. When there is no you in connection with that, there is no you there. When there is no you there, you are neither here nor yonder nor between the two. This, just this, is the end of suffering.”

When you establish your being upon lust towards things, it defines you, as I said, your ownership, things that you are committed to emotionally, things you crave for, that is what defines you, that is what your sense of self is. In the mind which is already perverted with lust, one thinks: “I am' is first”, and that's the most fundamental distortion that an ordinary person does, you think things are yours because you think you are, but it's actually the other way around, you are, you have a sense of self, because you keep owning things gratuitously and you keep owning them because you don't see them as unstable, you don't see them as subject to change, so even when the change happens blatantly in your

face, you don't see that as undermining your ownership, because you assumed yourself to come first and independent. You just isolate these examples when change goes against you and undermines your ownership and sense of self and then try to cover that up by getting something new, like possessions, and that's why sensuality, a form of ownership and consumption is the only way an ordinary person knows how to deal with any emotional discomfort that he experiences, he doesn't know how to escape from painful feeling in any other way than turning towards sensual feeling and trying to cover it up with new stuff. The fact is that things could change against your will and fundamentally they cannot be owned. By discerning that "subject to change" context, you will be unable to not include yourself in it as well, you will start feeling it. You start contemplating the vulnerable nature of your possessions and sooner or later you will feel the pain of dukkha when you touch upon something that is dear to you, then you start contemplating that as perishable, and you can realise that you yourself are also subject to that same perishing.

If you say, "Yes, the body is anicca", unless you feel anxiety and fear on account of that, you are not doing or seeing it correctly or you might be an Arahant, but again then why would you be even listening to these instructions. The point is that you, your sense of self is because there is the taking things as 'mine' first, it's because every single time you engaged with the object of the senses you do so with ignorance, without the right context, without maintaining the recognition that they are vulnerable throughout the beginning, middle and end, it doesn't matter what point you engage with things, they remain in their nature, at their core *anicca*.

"...When there is no you in connection with that, there is no you there. When there is no you there, you are neither here nor yonder nor between the two. This, just this, is the end of suffering..."

That's basically just the proliferation of that self view because it grows infinitely, so by being defined by objects of your senses, by chasing the pleasure of these things, you become a being in the world of these sense objects. That's why a thought of sense restraint, a thought of not chasing the sensual pleasure fills you with anxiety and terror. You realise that it will kill you. That's why even people who are not into Practice, when they chase sensuality - to the point where basically if they do not meet the required threshold of objects, they start experiencing very painful mental states. Equally, if you are not able to give in to that anxiety and be overwhelmed by it and refuse to engage with the sense objects to the same extent, then you are diminishing that gratuitously proliferated being in that world of sense objects, and you can do so by maintaining the *anicca* context of things you want to engage with.

After the Buddha gives those instructions, Malunkaputta says:

“I understand in detail what was stated briefly by the Blessed one. Having seen a sight, (Having heard a sound, smelled a smell, tasted a taste, touched a touch, known a phenomenon...) recollectedness is forgotten/confused(context is lost) when attending to the sign of the ‘beloved’. He experiences an impassioned mind and he keeps holding....”

Having seen a form without the context you would be confused, as in you are already putting it first as opposed to second, not seeing the right order. It means you are pulled by pleasure and as I said in the beginning of this talk, the way to not be pulled by pleasure is not to never see things but to never lose the context - the recognition of the right order. If there is lust, that means that there is the absence of context.

“He experiences an impassioned mind and he keeps holding (assuming)....”

He is assuming it in the wrong order.

“For him, with the arising of sights, various feelings increase. For him, the mind is spoiled by desire and irritation. Accumulating suffering in this way, Nibbana is said to be far away.”

Your mode of being becomes dependent upon the sights, etc. Which means that now whatever else you start experiencing, like feelings, you are just proliferating more and more. That's why if sensuality is not kept in check by circumstances limiting access to it, everybody would be an addict, and most people are addicts one way or another. What I mean is that it is not a static thing, where you can just enjoy sensuality and then restrain yourself. No, each time you enjoy sensuality that means next time you will need to enjoy more of it, your being grows towards it. You become more dependent upon it. It's not a static thing and that's the danger you have to recognise as well. People think “Ok, I understand this so I will restrain later”, but later might be too late, it might be too much. You only have a certain capacity to withdraw yourself from it and if you overflow that being of sensuality, you will not have means to get yourself out of it anymore. You became too dependent.

“...Accumulating suffering in this way, Nibbana is said to be far away...”

It builds up and then even when a person with all of that piled up on him thinks about nibbana, he will think of it in terms of that pile up. In other words, for him nibbana will be another sensual thing, the greatest pleasure, the fulfilment of desire, which is just an extension of everything else that he has been chasing so far.

What a puthujjana thinks death is, that is closer to nibbana than what he thinks nibbana is, and that is why sometimes when the Buddha taught nibbana to some people they were upset. Nibbana is the

death of your sense of self, your proliferated being upon sense objects. That's why the true practice, practically speaking, more often than not, will be unpleasant for people certainly in the beginning, because it's going to be about undoing that sense of self, not finding that last missing piece that will make you complete or help you abide in the ultimate joy of bliss forever. No, it's about undoing that whole stinky pile of sensual rubbish. And the more of that pile you accumulate, the more work you will have to do to clean it up.

Procrastination is carelessness and that will only accumulate suffering. For example, many people who read the suttas recognise what needs to be done, but keep absolving themselves from the sense of duty to do it, waiting for the right conditions, and that procrastination is not a static thing. For as long as it lasts, it will result in more things that you have to clean up. If you could not make yourself clean your room when it was barely cluttered, then because of that procrastinating, you will have 100 times more things to clean up,...good luck starting then.

“He is not impassioned by sights (sounds, smells, tastes, touches, or phenomena...). Having seen a sight he is recollected. He experiences a dispassionate mind and he doesn't keep holding. For one seeing a sight like this, while practising, feeling is exhausted, not accumulated. He lives like this, recollected. Diminishing suffering in this way, Nibbana is said to be nearby.”

There is no craving being cultivated towards sense objects. He prioritises the context not the content of his experience.